


Response to Comments

## **Chapter 4. Local Agencies Comment Letters**



**Comment Letter AL001****AL001**



January 29, 2004

JAN 29 2004

California High Speed Rail Authority  
925 L Street Suite 1425  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Forum on California's High Speed Rail service - comments

To Whom It May Concern:

The Transportation and Traffic Division within the City of Sunnyvale attended the forum of California's High Speed Rail service on January 29, 2004 and has the following comments/questions:

1. To what extent were conventional "off the shelf" fast train technologies (120-150 MPH) such as the Acela or the many fast trains in use in Europe considered? Wouldn't an incremental step to conventional fast trains make more sense from the standpoints of financial sustainability and implementation before pursuing a 200 MPH + high speed rail system? AL001-1
2. How would the operating finances of the proposed high speed rail system compare to the existing Northeast Corridor operation? What level of subsidy is envisioned for California high speed rail? AL001-2
3. Communities along the Peninsula are already subject to considerable train noise and other disruptions from Caltrain. How will noise from high speed rail be mitigated on communities like Sunnyvale? AL001-3
4. What are the selling points to a community like Sunnyvale that will realize construction disruption, noise and increased government bond indebtedness, but little direct travel benefit? AL001-4

Thank you for the opportunity to attend the forum. Please contact me with any questions or comments. I can be reached at (408) 730-7330 or [jwitthaus@ci.sunnyvale.ca.us](mailto:jwitthaus@ci.sunnyvale.ca.us).

Sincerely,

Jack Witthaus  
Transportation and Traffic Manager

ADDRESS ALL MAIL TO: P.O. BOX 3707 SUNNYVALE, CALIFORNIA 94088-3707  
For deaf access, call TDD/TTY (408) 730-7501



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**Response to Comments of Jack Witthaus, Transportation and Traffic Manager, City of Sunnyvale, January 29, 2004 (Letter AL001)**

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**AL001-1**

Please see standard responses 2.9.1 and 2.9.2.

**AL001-2**

Please see standard responses 2.1.1, 2.1.2, and 2.1.6 in regards to the Authority's ridership forecasts, HST operation finances, and figures for the Northeast Corridor. Like the Acela service, the proposed HST would be expected to have passenger revenues that would exceed operational and maintenance costs.

According to Amtrak, the Acela service operates without subsidy, as an exclusive service independent of other Amtrak business. No operating subsidy is envisioned for the proposed HST System. The Authority's Final Business Plan estimated that the proposed HST system would generate an operating surplus.

**AL001-3**

Please see standard response 3.4.1 and standard response 3.4.2. Please also see standard response 6.1.5 in regards to potential noise impacts on the Caltrain corridor.

Through the San Francisco Peninsula the HST is planned to operate at speeds below a maximum of 125 miles per hour. Sound levels from high-speed trains at speeds of up to 125 mph are similar to the existing Caltrain commuter trains traveling at speeds of up to 79 mph. Introduction of HST service on the Peninsula would also require complete grade separation and would thus eliminate horn noise due to grade crossings. Furthermore, a new HST system would be designed and developed to meet state-of-the-art technology specifications for noise and vibration, based on the desire to provide the highest quality train service possible. Trains and

tracks would be maintained in accordance with all applicable standards to minimize noise and vibration. Remaining noise impacts can be reduced substantially by the installation of sound barrier walls constructed to shield receivers from train noise. The design of and specifications for noise barriers appropriate for specific corridor segments of the proposed HST system would depend on the location and height of noise-sensitive buildings and would be considered during project-level reviews.

**AL001-4**

The Summary Chapter of the Program EIR/EIS describes the reasoning behind conclusion that the proposed HST system is the best alternative for helping to meet California's future intercity transportation demands. California's transportation network, economy, and environment influence all Californians (not just residents of cities with HST stations).

While there is not an HST station proposed for Sunnyvale, the proposed San Jose HST station would be about 7 miles from Sunnyvale and would be a multimodal station with a direct connection to the Caltrain commuter rail service that serves the Peninsula and has a stop at Sunnyvale. The HST service through Sunnyvale would be on the existing Caltrain right-of-way and result in an improved regional commuter service—electrified, fully grade-separated, with additional tracks and fencing—that would help mitigate the impacts of additional rail service along the Peninsula. Shared-use improvements in this corridor would result in safety and service improvements for Peninsula commuters and potentially improve automobile traffic flow at rail crossings and reduce noise impacts, since a grade-separated system could eliminate trains blowing warning horns throughout the alignment.



## Comment Letter AL002

AL002

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**  
383 KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION / LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012

VIOLET VARONA-LUKENS, EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
(213) 974-1411

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD  
GLORIA MOLINA  
YVONNE BRATHWAITE BURKE  
ZENY YAROSLAVSKI  
DON KNABE  
MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH

January 27, 2004

Mr. Mehdi Morshed, Executive Director  
California High-Speed Rail Authority  
925 L Street, Suite 1425  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Morshed:

At its meeting held January 27, 2004, on motion of Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors went on record in support of the High-Speed Rail Antelope Valley Alignment and the Palmdale Station.

For your information, enclosed is a copy of the Minute Order detailing the Board's action.

Very truly yours,

*Violet Varona-Lukens*

VIOLET VARONA-LUKENS  
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

4012704-7

Enclosure



**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer  
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
Los Angeles, California 90012

At its meeting held January 27 2004, the Board took the following action:

7

Supervisor Antonovich made the following statement:

"The High-Speed Rail Antelope Valley Alignment, together with the Palmdale station, will provide high-speed passenger service to 700,000 more people and 270,000 more jobs than the proposed route directly from Bakersfield to Los Angeles through the Grapevine Pass. According to the Southern California Association of Governments, northern Los Angeles County will experience one of the largest increases in population during the next 25 years. Palmdale and the surrounding communities have one of the fastest growth rates in the State of California. It is essential that this region be included in the high-speed rail route in order to accommodate this growing population. Providing high speed rail service to the Antelope Valley rather than through the Grapevine Pass will increase economic benefit for the region and also for the State of California as a whole. The net economic benefit for the State of California with the Antelope Valley alignment is estimated at \$855 million.

"According to the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation, there is a continuing need for industrial space in the County of Los Angeles, the lack of which will lead to significant economic losses for the region. In order to avoid the loss of the County's tax base, it is essential that the high speed rail alignment be placed through this growing portion of the County of Los Angeles. The High-Speed Rail Antelope Valley Alignment will provide transportation incentives necessary to attract industries to one of the few places in the County of Los Angeles that can sustain residential and industrial development. The High-Speed Rail Antelope Valley Alignment will also provide the backbone for the transportation improvements necessary to attract airlines to the Palmdale Airport."

(Continued on Page 2)

- 1 -

AL002-1



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**Comment Letter AL002 Continued**

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7 (Continued)

Merritt Holloway addressed the Board.

After discussion, on motion of Supervisor Antonovich, seconded by Supervisor Burke, unanimously carried, the Board took the following actions:

1. Went on record in support of the High-Speed Rail Antelope Valley Alignment and the Palmdale Station; and
2. Instructed the Executive Office of the Board to send a letter to the High-Speed Rail Authority advising them of the Board's support.

AL002-1  
cont.

4012704-7

Copies distributed:

Each Supervisor  
Chief Administrative Officer  
County Counsel

Letter sent to:

Executive Director, California High-Speed Rail Authority

- 2 -



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**Response to Comments of Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors,  
January 30, 2004 (Letter AL002)**

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**AL002 -1**

Acknowledged. Please see standard response 6.23.1.



## Comment Letter AL003

AL003



**MONTEREY BAY**  
Unified Air Pollution Control District  
serving Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties

24580 Silver Cloud Court • Monterey, California 93940 • 831/647-9411 • FAX 831/647-8501

AIR POLLUTION CONTROL OFFICER  
Douglas Quetin



February 27, 2004

**DISTRICT  
BOARD  
MEMBERS**

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King City

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Santa Cruz  
County

California High-Speed Train DEIR/EIS Comments  
925 L Street, Suite 1425  
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: DEIR/EIS - CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED TRAIN

Dear Staff:

We have reviewed the referenced document and have no comments at this time. Since this is a program EIR/EIS, we assume that additional analysis will be done on routes currently designated for continued investigation, e.g., routes through Gilroy. If a Gilroy alternative is selected, we recommend that comments in our letter of May 4, 2001 be addressed.

AL003-1

Thank you for the opportunity to review the document. Please do not hesitate to call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Janet Brennan  
Supervising Planner  
Planning and Air Monitoring Division



CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Railroad  
Administration**



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**Response to Comments of Janet Brennan, Supervising Planner, Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District,  
March 1, 2004 (Letter AL003)**

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**AL003-1**

Acknowledged. Please see standard response 6.3.1.



## Comment Letter AL004

AL004

03/10/04 WED 15:13 FAX 559 436 1659

GRANVILLE HOMES

002



2100 Tulare Street, Suite 619  
Fresno, California 93721-2111

Telephone: (559) 233-4148 • Fax: (559) 233-9645  
Website Address: www.fresnocog.org

March 23, 2004

Attn: California High-Speed Train  
Draft Program EIR/EIS Comments  
925 L Street, Suite 1425  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Subject: Comments on the Draft Program EIR/EIS**

The following two letters from Granville Homes and the Building Industry Association of the San Joaquin Valley comment on the issue of the alignment of the express loop to the west of the Fresno Metropolitan Area, as identified and discussed in the Draft Program EIR/EIS. I am submitting these letters to the Authority on their behalf as their official comments. I would note, however, that they may choose to submit additional comments prior to the end of the review and comment period, either directly or through the Council of Fresno County Governments or some other agency.

Should you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to call me at (559) 233-4148. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Clark C. Thompson, Planning Coordinator  
Council of Fresno County Governments

Enclosures: Letter from Granville Homes dated March 10, 2004  
Letter from the BIA dated March 12, 2004

Cc: Jeffrey T. Roberts, Granville Homes  
Jeffrey B. Harris, BIA

**Member Agencies:** The cities of Clovis, Coalinga, Firebaugh, Fowler, Fresno, Huron, Kerman, Kingsburg, Mendota, Orange Cove, Parlier, Reedley, San Joaquin, Sanger, Selma & Fresno County



March 10, 2004

Mr. Clark Thompson  
Fresno COG Rail Committee  
Council of Fresno County Governments  
2100 Tulare Street, Suite 619  
Fresno, CA 93721-2111

Subject: Alignment of High Speed Rail Line

Dear Mr. Thompson,

I am writing to express concern about the alignment depicted on Figure 6.3-3b (Potential Fresno Station Options) in the summary package provided to TTC members. I am unable to present our concerns in person, but request that you submit this letter into the formal record on this issue.

The Figure referenced above illustrates the rail alignment inside or adjacent to the adopted 2025 Fresno General Plan Sphere of Influence. This is of concern to our company because we are in the process of acquiring land in the vicinity of Ashlan and Grantland and are preparing plans to develop the land as envisioned by Fresno City Planners. An elevated high speed rail facility adjacent to our project site will have negative impacts due to noise, visual impacts and potential safety issues. The City of Fresno has recently put a decade of effort into preparing and adopting the 2025 General Plan. This high speed rail facility (at the proposed location) would reduce the desirability of the land on the western edge of the community from Herndon to Hwy 180.

We would like to suggest that the proposed alignment be moved westerly to the Dickens alignment. This would provide an adequate 'buffer' for Fresno's future neighborhoods and save taxpayer dollars for land acquisition and mitigation.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to respond to the High Speed Rail Committee. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

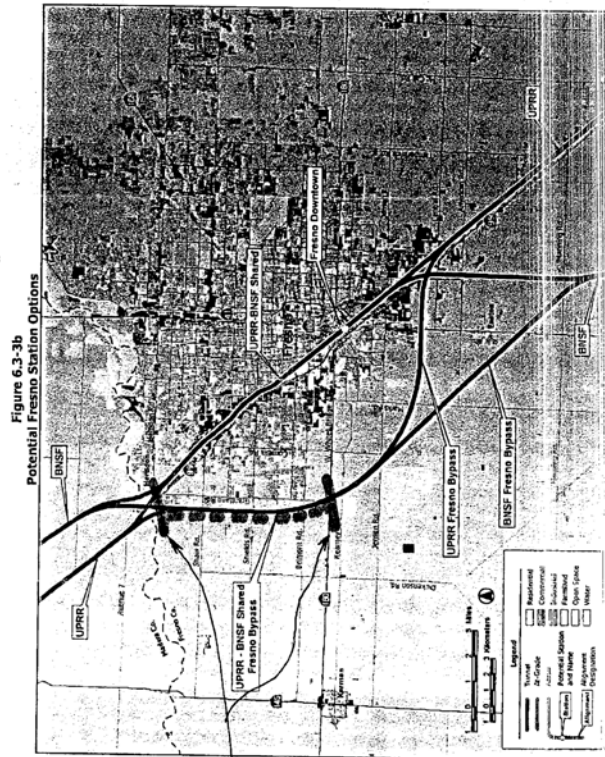
Jeffrey T. Roberts  
Granville Homes

1396 W. HERNDON AVE., SUITE #101, FRESNO, CA 93711

559 436-0900 436-1659 (FAX) LICENSE 586845



### Comment Letter AL004 Continued



AREA  
OF  
CONCERN



**Building Industry Association  
of the San Joaquin Valley**

RECEIVED

MAR 15 2004

March 12, 2004

BY:                       
FRESNO COG

Mr. Clark Thompson  
Council of Fresno County Governments  
2100 Tulare St., Ste. 619  
Fresno, CA 93721-2111

## RE: HIGH SPEED RAIL ALIGNMENT

Dear Mr. Thompson:

Representatives of BIA's Transportation Committee have reviewed the recently released draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the statewide high-speed train system. This letter serves to offer our official comments and we respectfully request it be accepted into the formal record for the March 15 meeting.


BIA is very concerned about the proposed high speed rail alignment, as depicted on figure 6.3-3b. An at-grade or aerial rail facility, as proposed, would likely produce significant noise impacts along Grantland Avenue and could effectively render a large portion of the western edge of Fresno's 2025 General Plan area impossible or undesirable to develop.

AL004-3

BIA recommends the CoG Rail Committee consider requesting the proposed high-speed rail alignment move westerly to the Dickinson alignment (see attachment), so as to provide an adequate buffer between the rail corridor and the future urbanized area. This alignment also makes great sense because the high-speed rail corridor would then provide an excellent permanent barrier between the marginal ag land east of Dickinson Avenue and the highly productive and prime ag land to the west of Dickinson Avenue, as noted by the State of California, Department of Conservation on their important farmland maps.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

  
Jeffrey B. Harris  
President and CEO

Jeffrey B. Harris  
President and CEO

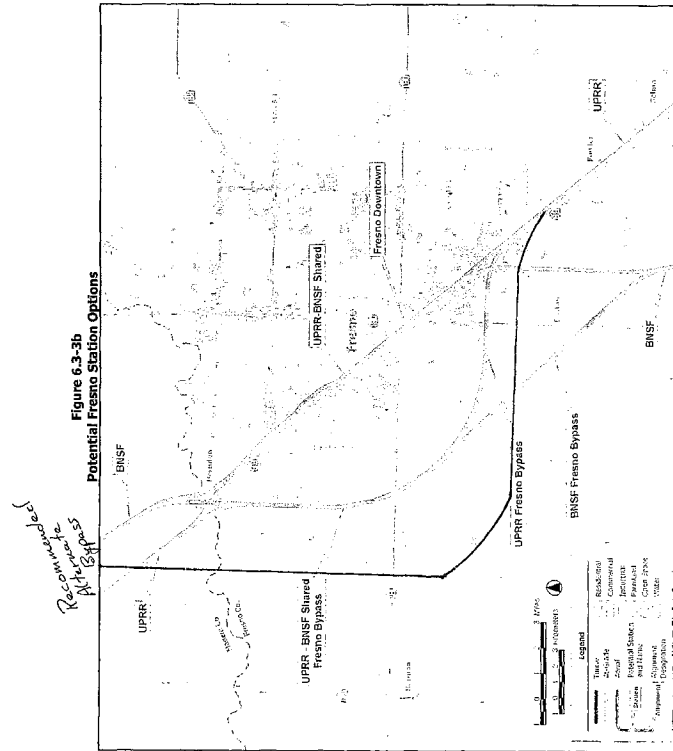
JBH:cc  
Attachment

high speed rail alignment

1477 E. Shaw Ave., Ste 126 • Fresno, California 93710 • Telephone (559) 221-5221 • FAX (559) 221-5220



## Comment Letter AL004 Continued





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**Response to Comments of Clark C. Thompson, Planning Coordinator, Council of Fresno County Governments, March 29, 2004 (Letter AL004)**

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**AL004-1**

Acknowledged. These comments pertain to the Fresno-Bypass loop alignment option. Please see standard response 6.20.5. Should the HST proposal move forward, future project specific studies will look at the direct alignment option through Fresno and a potential downtown Fresno HST station, but no further study of an "express loop" is planned.

**AL004-2**

Acknowledged. Please see standard response 6.20.5, and response to Comment AL004-1 above.

**AL004-3**

Acknowledged. Please see standard response 6.20.5, and response to Comment AL004-1 above.



## Comment Letter AL005

City of  
Santa Clarita

23920 Valencia Blvd.  
Suite 300  
Santa Clarita  
California 91355-2196  
Website: www.santa-clarita.com

Phone  
(661) 259-2489  
Fax  
(661) 259-8125

AL005



April 7, 2004

Attn: California High-Speed Train  
Draft Program EIR/EIS Comments  
925 L Street, Suite 1425  
Sacramento, CA 95814



Re: City of Santa Clarita Response to Draft EIR/EIS  
Proposed California High-Speed Train System

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Program EIR/EIS for the proposed California High-Speed Train System. Over the past several years, the City has followed the development of this project and is enthusiastic about the potential transportation, economic and social benefits that could result with access to high-speed passenger rail service along a statewide, 700-mile-long corridor. As you know, the City of Santa Clarita is affected by the two alternative Bakersfield-to-Los Angeles routes as the majority of the City is situated between Interstate 5 to the west and State Route 14 to the east.

In March 2004, the Santa Clarita City Council adopted a resolution in support of the SR-14/SR-58. This alignment is also supported by the cities of Palmdale and Lancaster in the Antelope Valley and Los Angeles County, as well as the North County Transportation Coalition (NCTC) as the preferred alignment alternative for the Bakersfield-to-Los Angeles route. As stated in Section 2 of the resolution, the Santa Clarita City Council also requests that the California High Speed Rail Authority consider a station location in the Santa Clarita Valley. This resolution is attached to this letter for your information.

The City recognizes that this Draft Program EIR/EIS covers a large area and provides only a general discussion of environmental impacts along the proposed corridor and alternative routes. It is expected that subsequent environmental analysis will occur following project approval that provides a closer look at existing conditions along the corridor and identifies specific impacts related to the construction and operation of a high speed train system.

The City of Santa Clarita wishes to be active in the environmental review and design process and will assist the California High Speed Rail Authority by providing information on the Santa Clarita Valley's transportation needs, ecological resources, existing and planned land uses, and visual character. Specifically, the rail segment that extends through Elsmore Canyon along the SR 14 corridor should be completely tunneled to avoid visual and biological impacts to this natural open space resource.

Letter of Response to Draft Program EIR/EIS  
Proposed California High-Speed Train System  
April 7, 2004  
Page 2

City planning and engineering staff will be attending the public hearing scheduled for April 13, 2004 in Los Angeles. Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this EIR/EIS process for the proposed California High-Speed Train System. If you have any questions or require City planning documents, please contact me or Lisa Hardy, Senior Planner, at (661) 255-4330.

Sincerely,

Vincent P. Bertoni, AICP  
Interim Director of Planning & Building Services

Attachment

VPB:LMH  
S:\pbs\advance\hsr\hsrltrpril 2004.doc

AL005-1

AL005-2

AL005-3



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER



## Comment Letter AL005 Continued

## RESOLUTION NO. 04-31

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF  
SANTA CLARITA, CALIFORNIA, SUPPORTING AN  
ANTELOPE VALLEY ROUTE ALIGNMENT FOR THE PROPOSED  
CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL SYSTEM

WHEREAS, the California High-Speed Rail Authority has been designated by the California State Legislature to design, plan, and construct a High-Speed Rail line that will connect the northern and southern ends of the State; and

WHEREAS, the California Legislature by enacting AB 971 envisioned a high-speed rail service that would provide maximum convenience to populated areas in the Antelope and San Joaquin Valleys, as well as major communities in the Los Angeles, Fresno, and Bay Area/Sacramento Corridor; and

WHEREAS, subsequent extensive and costly publicly-funded studies have concurred that the most practical route for a new high-speed rail line connecting both ends of California will pass through the populated areas of the Antelope Valley, which has been identified as one of the highest growth areas of the State; and

WHEREAS, a major need and purpose of the High-Speed Ground Transportation System for travelers is to move people to and from mid-line cities to end points and back, and not only to connect the end line cities that already enjoy fast, economical, and frequent air service; and

WHEREAS, adoption of a route through the Antelope Valley will help ensure a higher ridership for the high-speed rail service while adding approximately six to nine minutes to the Los Angeles Bay Area trip; and

WHEREAS, fast and convenient access to the new Palmdale Regional Airport by high-speed service is essential to maximize the public benefits of convenient transfers between the airport and the rail network; and

WHEREAS, the California Transportation Commission and rail studies have determined that the new high-speed rail system must be able to move both passengers and much freight now carried in trucks and containers on our crowded highways in order to reduce traffic congestion and reduce air pollution to meet federal mandates; and

WHEREAS, a high-speed rail route passing from the Los Angeles area through the Antelope Valley, stopping at the Palmdale Regional Airport, thence northward to Bakersfield and Fresno to the Bay area, will serve all the people of California better than any other alternative alignment.

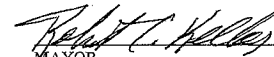
NOW, THEREFORE, the City Council of the City of Santa Clarita does hereby resolve as follows:

SECTION 1. That the City Council supports the Antelope Valley route, and hereby urges the Governor, the Legislature, and the High-Speed Rail Authority to formally adopt the Antelope Valley Route herein proposed as the final route chosen by the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

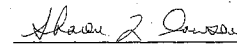
SECTION 2. That the City Council requests that the Authority consider a Santa Clarita station location.

SECTION 3. The City Clerk shall certify to the adoption of this Resolution.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of March, 2004.

  
MAYOR

ATTEST:

  
CITY CLERK

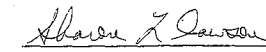
STATE OF CALIFORNIA )  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES ) ss.  
CITY OF SANTA CLARITA )

I, Sharon L. Dawson, CMC, City Clerk of the City of Santa Clarita, do hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted by the City Council of the City of Santa Clarita at a regular meeting thereof, held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of March, 2004, by the following vote:

AYES: COUNCILMEMBERS: McLean, Smyth, Weste, Ferry, Keller

NOES: COUNCILMEMBERS: None

ABSENT: COUNCILMEMBERS: None

  
CITY CLERK



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**Comment Letter AL005 Continued**

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA       )  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES    ) ss: \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY OF SANTA CLARITA       )

CERTIFICATION OF  
CITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION

I, Sharon L. Dawson, City Clerk of the City of Santa Clarita, do hereby certify that this is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution No. 04-31, adopted by the City Council of the City of Santa Clarita, California on March 23, 2004, which is now on file in my office.

Witness my hand and seal of the City of Santa Clarita, California, this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sharon L. Dawson, CMC  
City Clerk

By \_\_\_\_\_  
Susan Coffman  
Deputy City Clerk



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**Response to Comments of Vincent P. Bertoni, AICP, Interim Director of Planning and Building Services, City of Santa Clarita, April 13, 2004 (Letter AL005)**

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**AL005-1**

Acknowledged. Please see standard response 6.23.1 in regards to the alignment between Bakersfield and Sylmar. Please also see standard response 2.28.2 in regards to a potential HST station in the Santa Clarita Valley.

**AL005-2**

If a decision is made to move forward with the proposed HST system, subsequent project-level environmental analysis will be required for all portions of the proposed system prior to final design and construction.

**AL005-3**

Acknowledged. Should the HST proposal move forward, during the project-level review, the Authority will work closely with potentially affected communities to avoid, reduce and/or include feasible measures to mitigate potential impacts to local communities and to the natural environment.



## Comment Letter AL006

AL006



METROPOLITAN  
TRANSPORTATION  
COMMISSION

Joseph P. Boer MetroCenter  
101 Eighth Street  
Oakland, CA 94607-4700  
Tel: 510.464.7700  
TTY/TDD: 510.464.7769  
Fax: 510.464.7848  
e-mail: info@mtc.ca.gov  
Web site: www.mtc.ca.gov

Steve Kinney, Chair  
Metropolitan Council

Joe Rubin, Vice Chair  
San Francisco Mayor's Office

Tina Ammons  
City and County of San Francisco

David L. Anderson  
California Center for Policy

Tina Ammons  
U.S. Department of Energy  
and Urban Development

James T. Boff Jr.  
Santa Clara County

Mark DeSantis  
Contra Costa County

Bill Dodd  
Napa County and Cities

Doreen M. Gagliardi  
U.S. Department of Transportation

Scott Haggerty  
Ventura County

Barbara Kaufman  
San Francisco Bay Conservation  
and Development Commission

Sam Leung  
City of San Mateo County

John McLeary  
City of Santa Clara County

Michael D. Nevin  
San Mateo County

Brian Sotgiu  
San Joaquin, Transportation  
and Housing Agency

James P. Sporing  
San Joaquin County and Cities

Patricia Turlatt  
Association of Bay Area Governments

Sharon Wright  
Sonoma County and Cities

Shelia Young  
City of Maricopa County

Steve Heninger  
Executive Director

Ann Flower  
Agency Director/Secretary

Theresa W. McMillan  
Agency Director/Chief

Theresa W. McMillan  
Agency Director/Chief

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Agency Director/Chief

Theresa W. McMillan  
Agency Director/Chief

Theresa W. McMillan  
Agency Director/Chief

April 22, 2004

Mehdi Morshed  
Executive Director  
California High-Speed Rail Authority  
925 L Street Suite 1425  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Comments Regarding Draft Program Environment Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed California High-Speed Train System

Dear Mr. Morshed:

Thank you for offering this opportunity to comment on the Draft Program EIR/EIS for California's High-Speed Train System. As you know, MTC has been involved with the planning for high-speed rail (HSR) in California over several years and hosted staff from the High Speed Rail Authority at Commission meetings on a few occasions.

As you know, our Commission's interest in HSR has mostly focused on alignments and stations serving the Bay Area. In light of this interest, we offer the following general comments:

Entry into the Bay Area

In June 1999, MTC adopted Resolution No. 3198, which recommends a southerly HSR access alignment to the Bay Area via the Pacheco Pass gateway due to its superior performance characteristics compared to the Altamont Pass alternative.

MTC reaffirmed its support for the Pacheco Pass alignment at a subsequent meeting of its Planning and Operations Committee in May 2003. The Commission believes that while the Pacheco Pass alignment had been previously estimated to cost about \$2 billion more to build than the Altamont alignment, it supports the Pacheco Pass HSR gateway for several reasons, including:

CA HSR EIR/EIS Comment  
April 15, 2004  
Page 2

- The Pacheco Pass gateway is estimated to have 1.1 million more HSR riders per year and \$56 million more in annual revenues than the Altamont Pass alignment (2015 forecast)
- The Pacheco Pass gateway would more directly serve the largest Bay Area urban centers:
  - direct service through San Jose
  - faster and more frequent service provided to San Francisco/Oakland; Altamont Pass alignment would split service between San Francisco/Oakland/San Jose
  - easier and less costly to operate
- The Altamont Pass alignment would require a new bay crossing for service to San Francisco, with the attendant risk of delays and cost escalation associated with construction of a new bridge.

AL006-1 cont.

Internal Bay Area Service

MTC is pleased to see that the EIR/EIS proposes to serve all three of the region's major cities, San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose with direct service; these connections are also supported by MTC Resolution No. 3198. MTC supports the use of shared tracks on the San Francisco Peninsula since separate tracks adjacent to Caltrain or US 101 would require extensive purchase of additional right of way.

AL006-2

Along the East Bay, the I-880 alignment between San Jose and Oakland would appear to be preferred due to its estimated lower cost and higher ridership potential; this assumes you can resolve the Fremont Central Park Lake tunneling and I-880 median construction issues mentioned in the report. Expanding the Mulford line, which is currently used by the Amtrak Capitols and Altamont Commuter Express services, would appear to be inferior to the I-880 alignment due to its higher cost, lower ridership potential and environmental issues; nonetheless, it should be evaluated further in case the I-880 alignment proves infeasible.

AL006-3

With regard to the proposed downtown Oakland station, West Oakland would appear to be a desired location. Not only would it connect to BART, but would also be better positioned to connect future service to San Francisco or Sacramento. However, we recommend that the Authority continue its evaluation of a downtown Oakland/12<sup>th</sup> Street station as well, since the detailed project level information has not been completed for these stations.

AL006-4

Regional Measure 2 Regional Rail Study

As you may know, Bay Area voters recently approved Regional Measure 2. The measure will increase tolls by \$1 on the region's seven State-owned toll bridges on July 1, 2004 to fund a number of transportation projects. Regional Measure 2 also requires that MTC adopt a Bay Area Regional Rail Plan by July 1, 2006. The plan will recommend connectivity improvements to existing Bay Area rail services and recommend expansion of new services. The plan may also include evaluation of how regional rail systems would integrate with the HSR system. Regional Measure 2 specifies that the plan be governed by a steering committee consisting of a number of partner agencies, including the California High Speed Rail Authority. We think this will be an important study for both the region and the State, and look forward to collaborating with the Authority to carry it out.

AL006-5



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**Comment Letter AL006 Continued**

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CA HSR EIR/EIS Comment  
April 15, 2004  
Page 3

In closing, we understand that the program EIR/EIS evaluates potential environmental impacts at a conceptual and planning level. Should HSR secure funding toward project implementation, project-specific environmental analyses will be conducted on HSR segments and station locations. MTC staff supports this incremental approach to HSR development and is prepared to support the Authority to develop a detailed alignment and station sites that will offer the greatest convenience to the most Bay Area residents.

AL006-6

Sincerely,

  
Steve Heminger  
Executive Director

DJ

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**Response to Comments of Steve Heminger, Executive Director, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, April 28, 2004 (Letter AL006)**

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**AL006-1**

Please see standard response 6.3.1.

**AL006-2**

Acknowledged. Please see standard response 6.2.3 and standard response 6.1.4.

**AL006-3**

Acknowledged. Please see standard response 6.2.2.

**AL006-4**

Acknowledged. The West Oakland site and the 12<sup>th</sup> Street/City Center site would both provide good connectivity with BART and would have similar potential for environmental issues. The Authority has concluded that there should be continued investigation in future tiered environmental reviews of both the West Oakland and the 12<sup>th</sup> Street/City Center sites as potential locations for a terminus station in Oakland.

**AL006-5 and -6**

Please see standard response 8.1.7. Should the HST project move forward, the Authority would continue to work with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission on project-level environmental analysis, construction, and operation of the HST system.